

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 AID-20 PC-04 NIC-01 CU-04 IGA-02 EUR-25

SNM-02 EB-11 COME-00 DRC-01 /169 W

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R 081940Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6180

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 SAN JOSE 0508

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CS

SUBJECT: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT

1. SUMMARY: IN AN HOUR AND A HALF FAREWELL MEETING WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT ODUBER, WHICH WAS IN EFFECT A TOUR D'HORIZON OF US/CR RELATIONS AND HIS FUTURE PLANS, ODUBER INDICATED HIS DESIRE FOR A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EMBASSY AND THE USG, AND ARRANGEMENTS WERE AGREED UPON FOR CLOSE LIAISON BETWEEN HIM AND HIS NOMINEES AND THE EMBASSY DURING THE PRE-INAUGURATION PERIOD. HE INDICATED HIS INTENTIONS OF ESTABLISHING A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH PEREZ IN VENEZUELA, HERNANDEZ COLON IN PUERTO RICO AND LOPEZ IN COLOMBIA IF HE IS ELECTED IN APRIL, A LINK-UP IN THE TRADITION OF THE FIGUERES-BETANCOURT-MUNOZ MARIN "AXIS" OF SEVERAL YEARS AGO. ODUBER PLANS A STRONG CENTRALIZED EXECUTIVE, AFFIRMS THAT HE WILL TAKE STRONG ACTION AGAINST COMMUNIST INFILTRATION IN THE UNIVERSITY, STATES HE WILL GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION TO IMPROVING HIS INTELLIGENCE AND NARCOTICS

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ORGANIZATIONS AND THE EFFICIENCY OF THE POLICE.

ODUBER PLANS A SHORT TRIP WITHIN A WEEK TO VENEZUELA AND PUERTO RICO, WILL MEET ALSO WITH SOMOZA AND TORRIJOS AND PLANS TO SPEND A QUIET FEW DAYS VACATIONING INCOGNITO IN KEY WEST, FLORIDA. END SUMMARY.

2. IN AN HOUR AND A HALF FAREWELL MEETING WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT DANIEL ODUBER, WHICH TOOK PLACE AT THE RESIDENCE THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 6, WE REVIEWED US/CR RELATIONS AND FUTURE PLANS AND PROSPECTS. PRINCIPAL MATTERS DISCUSSED WERE AS FOLLOWS:

A. ORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT.

(1) ODUBER CONFIRMED THAT FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT AND MINISTER-DESIGNATE OF THE PRESIDENCY, CARLOS MANUEL CASTILLO, WILL BE HIS "CHIEF OF STAFF" WITH BROAD COORDINATING AND EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY. ODUBER INTENDS TO ESTABLISH A STRONG ORCHESTRATION AND CENTRALIZED EXECUTIVE BRANCH, INCLUDING ESTABLISHING FIRM CONTROL OVER THE AUTONOMOUS AGENCIES AND PARTICULARLY THE CENTRAL BANK. HE WILL FOR THIS PURPOSE RELY HEAVILY ON THE PLANNING OFFICE, BUT HE HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHO WILL HEAD IT.

(2) HE IS STILL DEBATING CABINET NOMINATIONS. HE SAID HE HAD SPECIFICALLY DECIDED ON RENAMING FACIO AND ON RODRIGO QUIROS AS MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY. HE IS CONSIDERING THE APPOINTMENT OF RODOLFO SILVA, THE PRESENT MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, AS AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON, AND DEPUTY JENARO VALVERDE AS AMBASSADOR TO THE UN.

B. VISITS TO CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES.

(1) ODUBER PLANS TO MEET WITH SOMOZA AND TORRIJOS AT SOME POINT VERY SOON. DURING THE NEXT TWO WEEKS HE PLANS ALSO TO VISIT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ IN VENEZUELA AND HERNANDEZ COLON IN PUERTO RICO. ODUBER SAID THAT HE INTENDS TO

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MAINTAIN A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH PEREZ AND HERNANDEZ COLON, AND WILL DO THE SAME WITH ALFONSO LOPEZ IF LOPEZ IS ELECTED PRESIDENT IN COLOMBIA. HE SAID THIS ASSOCIATION WOULD BE IN THE TRADITION OF THE FIGUERES-BETANCOURT-MUNOZ MARIN RELATIONSHIP AND EVEN REFERRED TO IT AS A NEW "CARIBBEAN LEGION" BUT THAT IT WOULD BE USED FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES. ODUBER SAID HE

ALSO PLANNED TO SPEND A FEW DAYS VACATION IN
KEY WEST, FLORIDA. HE SAID HE WANTS NO
PROTOCOLARY ATTENTIONS; HE SIMPLY WANTS TO REST
QUIETLY WITHOUT ATTENTION. I TOLD HIM THERE
WOULD BE NO PROBLEM WITH THAT BUT THAT I
THOUGHT IT ADVISABLE THAT HE HAVE SOME SECURITY
PROTECTION AND THAT I WOULD TAKE STEPS TO SEE
THAT THIS WOULD BE LAID ON. HE PROMISED TO GIVE
US HIS ITINERARY, DATES AND ADDRESS NEXT WEEK.

C. IMMEDIATE PLANS.

(1) WHILE WE DID NOT DWELL AT LENGTH ON
ODUBER'S NEW GOVERNMENT AND LEGISLATIVE PLANNING,
HE DID INDICATE HIS INTEREST IN THE SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENTAL FIELD (SEE E BELOW), HE DID REMARK,
HOWEVER, THAT HE BELIEVES HIS GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE
TO TAKE ON THE TASK OF LAYING DOWN CLEAR GROUND
RULES FOR INVESTMENT IN REAL ESTATE AND BEACH
DEVELOPMENT, AND THE INFLUX OF PENSIONADOS.
HE WOULD WANT TO TALK TO US ABOUT THESE
PROBLEMS AS HIS IDEAS DEVELOP. I AGREED
THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT AREA TO COVER IN ORDER TO
PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF ALL AND AVOID MORE
SERIOUS PROBLEMS OR MISUNDERSTANDINGS LATER.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6181

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 SAN JOSE 0508

(2) ODUBER SAID HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS. HE NOTED THAT THE ELECTIONS WERE A DISASTER FOR THE LEFT. HE SAID MANUEL MORA IS FINISHED; THE USSR MIGHT AS WELL "PENSION HIM OFF". HE SAID HE NOW FEELS THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT COMMUNIST THREAT IS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA, AND HE PLANS TO UNDERTAKE A MAJOR EFFORT TO ISOLATE AND OFFSET THEM. (HE DID NOT BRING UP THE SOVIET EMBASSY, AND I DID NOT PRESS HIM ON IT, BUT, AS THE DEPARTMENT KNOWS, HE HAS PREVIOUSLY SAID CONFIDENTIALLY THAT HE WOULD SEEK TO RESTRICT ITS SIZE. SEE ALSO COMMENTS ON SECURITY/INTELLIGENCE BELOW.)

(3) ODUBER SAID HE PLANS A VERY SIMPLE AND RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVE INAUGURAL CEREMONY ON MAY 8. HE WILL INVITE SPECIAL DELEGATIONS FROM FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS; HE WILL ALSO EXTEND PRIVATE INVITATIONS TO SPECIFIC FRIENDS. HE SAID HE HAS ALREADY, OR WILL SOON, EXTEND PRIVATE INVITATIONS TO SENATORS HUBERT HUMPHREY AND EDWARD KENNEDY, AND TO FORMER US AMBASSADOR RAYMOND TELLES.

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D. SECURITY/INTELLIGENCE/NARCOTICS.

(1) ODUBER EXPRESSED HIS GREAT CONCERN OVER THE INADEQUACIES OF INTELLIGENCE AND POLICE COMMUNICATIONS AVAILABLE TO THE PRESIDENT. HE INDICATED THAT HE WILL CONCENTRATE ON IMPROVING THESE AND GIVE THEM GREAT PRIORITY. HE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THE US COULD ASSIST HIM IN THIS AREA. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE WISHED TO PROFESSIONALIZE THE CIVIL AND RURAL GUARDS, INCLUDING PERHAPS THE CONVERSION OF THE MILITARY POLICE UNIT INTO A SMALL, WELL-PREPARED IMMEDIATE REACTION FORCE. ODUBER SAID HE WAS GOING TO "DEMILITARIZE" THE POLICE, FOR EXAMPLE, ELIMINATING MILITARY TITLES AND CONVERTING THEM INTO A TRUE POLICE FORCE.

(2) WITH REGARD TO NARCOTICS, HE EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN ABOUT THE POTENTIAL PROBLEM AND ABOUT THE INADEQUACIES OF THE PRESENT GOCR CAPACITY TO MONITOR THIS PROBLEM.

(3) I EXPLAINED THE ASSISTANCE (AND THE LIMITATIONS WITH REGARD THERETO) THAT THE US MIGHT EXTEND IN THESE AREAS, AND I PARTICULARLY EMPHASIZED

THE RESTRICTIONS WITH REGARD TO ASSISTING THE POLICE WHICH RESULTED FROM THE TERMINATION OF THE AID PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM. I DID POINT OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF TRAINING IN THE US IN THIS AREA.

(4) ODUBER SAID THAT HE INTENDS TO NAME A SINGLE PERSON IN HIS PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE WHO WILL BE THE SENIOR SECURITY COORDINATOR AND WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING AND COORDINATING ALL NATIONAL SECURITY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THE RURAL AND CIVIL GUARDS. WE AGREED UPON APPROPRIATE LIAISON CONTACT WITH THIS ADVISOR, WHEN HE IS NAMED, TO EXPLORE POSSIBLE COOPERATION IN THIS AREA.

E. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE.

(1) I EXPRESSED TO ODUBER THE SCOPE OF OUR AID ACTIVITIES IN THE RURAL SECTOR. ODUBER HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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BEEN WELL INFORMED ON THE SCOPE OF THESE ACTIVITIES. HE EXPRESSED A STRONG CONCERN THAT THEY CONTINUE. I EXPLAINED THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO BE AS HELPFUL AS WE COULD IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL FIELD BUT THAT HE SHOULD KNOW THAT THERE WAS SENTIMENT IN WASHINGTON THAT COSTA RICA WAS ELIGIBLE TO "GRADUATE" FROM DEPENDENCE ON BILATERAL ASSISTANCE. ODUBER SAID WRYLY THAT HE HOPED GRADUATION COULD BE DEFERRED FOR FOUR YEARS. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE CARLOS MANUEL CASTILLO BE HIS PRINCIPAL COORDINATOR AND POINT OF CONTACT WITH REGARD TO DEVELOPMENTAL MATTERS. WE AGREED THAT USAID WOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH DR. CASTILLO IN A WEEK OR SO, BRIEF HIM ON PAST ACTIVITIES AND MAINTAIN A LIAISON FOR THESE MATTERS.

(2) ODUBER ALSO EXPRESSED GREAT INTEREST IN THE PEACE CORPS, PARTICULARLY IN HAVING COSTA RICAN YOUTH OBSERVE AND WORK WITH THE VOLUNTEERS. WE AGREED THAT WHEN HE RETURNS FROM HIS TRIP, WE WOULD ARRANGE FOR THE PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR TO BRIEF ODUBER ON THE SCOPE OF THE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM TO DATE.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6182

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 SAN JOSE 0508

F. GENERAL RELATIONS.

(1) I POINTED OUT TO THE PRESIDENT-ELECT THAT WE HAD NO REAL IMMEDIATE ISSUES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, WITH A POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE VESCO PROBLEM (THIS IS REPORTED SEPARATELY). ODUBER SAID THAT THERE WERE, OF COURSE, SUCH ISSUES AS THE PENSIONADOS, LAND PURCHASES AND REAL ESTATE, BUT THESE WERE QUITE AMENABLE TO COOPERATIVE HANDLING. ODUBER PARENTHETICALLY OBSERVED THAT HE WAS VERY INTERESTED IN THE ALCOA PROJECT AND THAT ICE WAS PRESSING HIM ON IT. HE WOULD BE TAKING THAT UP VERY SHORTLY.

(2) WE AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL IN THIS PRE-INAUGURAL PERIOD TO MAINTAIN CLOSE LIAISON AND DISCUSS THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF OUR RELATIONS AND COOPERATION. HAVING AGREED ON SPECIFIC LIAISONS, WE ALSO AGREED ON PERIODIC INTIME MEETINGS BETWEEN ODUBER AND THE AMBASSADOR.

3. COMMENT: TWO THREADS IN THE TAPESTRY OF OUR CONVERSATION ARE WORTH SINGLING OUT:
1) ODUBER'S VERY OPEN, VIRTUAL INVITATION TO WORK CLOSELY WITH HIS GOVERNMENT. THE CASP PREMISE THAT WE WOULD HAVE BY DEFINITION TO
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REDEFINE A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

IS NOW EVIDENCED "IN SPADES". WE HAVE A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO CONSOLIDATE WHAT WE POSITED AS THE MAIN GOAL OF OUR POLICY--ON-GOING CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS--AND TO IMPROVE AND CONSOLIDATE DRAMATICAL US INFLUENCE AND PRESTIGE IN COSTA RICA, IF WE HAVE THE IMAGINATION AND WILL TO DO IT. ODUBER'S AGREEMENT (AND REQUEST) FOR CLOSE AND INFORMAL LIAISON ON A VARIETY OF MATTERS IS FORTUNATE. WE WILL OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS BE MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO FUTURE ACTIONS AS THESE EMERGE FROM OUR CONVERSATIONS. IN THE MEANTIME, I STRESS FOR WASHINGTON'S ATTENTION THIS FELICITOUS AND FAVORABLE CLIMATE AND CONSEQUENT OPPORTUNITY.

2) ODUBER'S CLEAR INTENTION TO FORGE A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH PEREZ, HERNANDEZ COLON AND LOPEZ MICHELSEN (AND PROBABLY OTHERS) IS INTRIGUING, AND THIS SUGGESTS IT MAY BE A DEVELOPMENT

(IF RECIPROCATED ESPECIALLY BY VENEZUELA) OF SIGNIFICANCE AND INTEREST IN HEMISPHERE TERMS. IT ALSO SUGGESTS THE WISDOM OF THE DEPARTMENT ESTABLISHING SOME SORT OF RELATIONSHIP OR LIAISON WITH HERNANDEZ COLON. THE PUERTO RICAN GOVERNOR IS OBVIOUSLY GOING TO HAVE CLOSE CONTACTS WITH A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENTS, AND THERE IS AGAIN OPPORTUNITY HERE AND AT LEAST A NEED TO KNOW WHAT HE IS THINKING OR DOING.
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